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AMERICANS AND BRITISH DIFFER SHARPLY ON RELIGIOUS BELIEFS AND PRACTICES

A comparison of the religious beliefs and practices of the American and British publics reveals some sharp differences, as determined by Gallup surveys conducted in each country:

* Many more Americans (94 percent) than British (76 percent) believe in God.
* Americans are far more likely to believe in the divinity of Jesus Christ (78 percent to 55 percent).
* Americans are also more likely than are the British to believe that the Bible is the actual or inspired word of God.
* More than three times as many Americans as British attend church at least weekly.

DECLINE IN BELIEF IN DIVINITY OF CHRIST

The survey in Great Britain was conducted for the *Sunday Telegraph* and showed that belief in Christ as the Son of God and in the divine authority of the Bible is falling among the British public, but belief in God and Heaven shows some increase.

Earlier this year (March 21-26, 1979), the British Gallup Poll asked a nationally representative sample of 918 adults: "Which, if any, of the following do you believe in?" and the replies were:

	Today	1975	1973	1968
God	76	72	74	77
Heaven	57	49	51	54
Reincarnation	28	22	22	18
The Devil	22	20	18	21
Hell	22	20	20	23

As the following analysis shows, women more than men, the older more than the young, believe in God in Heaven; while belief in reincarnation, the Devil and Hell is more evenly spread:

	God	Heaven	Reincarnation	Devil	Hell
Overall	76	57	28	22	22
Men	68	47	23	20	20
Women	83	66	33	24	24
16-24	62	45	28	25	20
25-34	68	45	33	24	21
35-44	78	60	26	21	25
45-64	82	62	26	19	21
65+	86	70	30	23	24

NOT CHURCHGOING BUT STILL RELIGIOUS

Analysis by frequency of church-going shows similar sharp differences, and also shows that the non-attendance at church does not necessarily mean a lack of religious beliefs.

For example, while 96 per cent of those claiming to go to church at least once a month believe in God, 52 per cent of those who never or almost never go also believe in God. Belief in heaven drops from 78 per cent to 39 per cent respectively, between these two groups.

Belief in a personal God has fallen slightly and belief in some sort of spirit or life force has risen, as measured by replies to the questions: "Which of these statements comes closer to your belief?":

	Today	1963	1957
There is a personal God	35	38	41
There is some sort of spirit, a life force	41	33	37
I don't know what to think	17	20	16
I don't really think there is any sort of spirit or life force	8	9	6

Again, men and young adults are less likely to believe in a personal God than are women and the elderly. While 25 per cent of men believe in a personal God and 44 per cent think there is some sort of spirit or life force, the figures for women are 43 per cent and 40 per cent, respectively.

Fewer people now think that Jesus Christ was the Son of God, though this belief is still held by the majority of the general public.

Replies to the question: "Do you believe that Jesus Christ was the Son of God or just a man?" were:

	Today	1963	1957
Son of God	55	60	71
Just a man	25	16	9
Just a story	7	7	6
Don't know	13	17	14

Belief in Christ as the Son of God is highest among those claiming to go to Church at least once a month (88 per cent), women (65 per cent) and those aged 65 and over (61 per cent.)

CHURCHGOING IN RELATION TO BIBLE READING

Eighty per cent of those claiming to go to church at least once a month think that the Bible is essential to the Christian Church, compared with only 49 per cent of those who never, or almost never, go to church.

READER'S RESPONSE COLUMN

The editors of *Emerging Trends* invite you, the reader, to send us your suggestions for areas you would like to see surveyed. We also welcome your odservations on items that have already appeared in Emerging Trends.

The Role Of Prayer In U.S. Society

(Adapted from talk given by George Gallup, Jr., at the Center of Continuing Education of the Princeton Theological Seminary, Dec. 13, 1979)

Certain trends in religion in America are not encouraging. We note, for example, a decline in the proportion of adults who have received religious training during their youth; a drop in the percentage who believe religion is able to answer today's problems; and an upturn in the proportion who indicate they have no religious preference or affiliation.

Yet there is a noteworthy exception to a mass of worrisome statistics: Americans believe firmly in the power of prayer.

Here are some findings which give us reason to be encouraged about our prayer life:

* Teenagers may be turned off by organized religion, but only 13 percent never pray.
* Ninety-eight percent of churched Americans pray, but so do 76 percent of the unchurched.
* Religious training in the home leaves much to be desired, but six in 10 families say grace before meals and one in three parents (two in three among the "very religious") report that they have participated in shared prayer or meditation with their children during a given week.
* Surveys have recorded a growing interest in prayer groups.
* As a further indication of the belief in the importance of prayer, an overwhelming majority of Americans have consistently opposed the Supreme Court ruling outlawing prayer in public schools.
* We apparently have little doubt about the effectiveness of prayer – in a study conducted for CLIFF C. JONES by the Gallup Organization, Inc., seven in 10 Americans believe that those who pray will receive help and two-thirds of all respondents report that their prayers worked when they prayed for help.
* And in terms of what could be regarded as the ultimate goal of a religious person – to pray constantly or to live a life of prayer – one person in six says this describes his or her prayer life.

So, despite what is viewed as a trend toward secularization in this country, Americans are solid believers in the power of prayer. If it were not so, we would have real cause for concern about the future course of religion in this country.

At the same time, however, it must be noted that our prayer life is lacking in certain basic respects: it tends at times to be superficial and unstructured, we perhaps too often use our prayers for petition rather than adoration, thanksgiving or intercession; and finally we have not learned to integrate prayer into our daily lives – to live a life of prayer.

Despite weaknesses in our prayer life, the important fact remains that we believe in prayer. There is much on which to build. Think what could be accomplished in greater efforts were directed toward spiritual conseling and helping people work out their own prayer plans. Indeed, many of the currently unchurched say they would definitely consider joining the community of active believers if there were someone with whom they could discuss their spiritual needs.

Majority In Canada Want Religion In Schools Taught

A bare majority of Canadians (52%) would like religion taught in the public schools here, as determined by a recent Canadian Gallup Poll. The proportion who feel this way has remained virtually unchanged in the four studies conducted over the past three decades – in 1944 and in 1957, 50%, and in 1961, 53% answered "yes" to religious courses in the schools.

Regionally, results vary from a high of 69% in Quebec, to a low of 25% in British Columbia. And Catholics (65%) more than Protestants (46%) would like to see religion taught in their schools.

In the three age groups examined, more of the older group (56%) than of those under thirty years (47%) want religious instruction given.

Results today are based on 1,038 personal, in-home interviews with adults, 18 years and over, during the first week of October, 1979. A sample of this size is accurate within four percentage points, 19 in 20 times.

AMONG THE IMPORTANT AND EXCITING NEW TOPICS TO BE COVERED IN 1980:

Who are the evangelicals and what do they believe?

* * *

How many Americans have had an "out-of-body" or "life after death" experience?

* * *

Did churchgoing in 1979 increase or decrease?

* * *

Religious renewal on campus – fact or myth?

* * *

Are religious beliefs in Western Europe continuing to decline?

Parents Link TV And Crime

While no evidence has been amassed linking television violence conclusively with crime and anti-social behavior, the large majority of parents believe there to be a relationship.

The survey also shows that a larger majority of parents favor the proposal that all television programs with violence be shown only after 10:00 at night, after the bedtime of most children.

On the other hand, parents would not go as far as to remove entirely all television shows that portray violence.

While many parents believe a link exists between TV violence and anti-social behavior – and, in some cases, favor measures to reduce or eliminate violence on TV – a large proportion of parents, even of young children, do not place restrictions on either the number of hours watched or the type of programs viewed.

Following are the questions asked and the findings:

"Do you happen to put any restrictions on the types of programs your children can watch?"

	Yes	No	Don't Know
Parents (total)	49%	46%	5%
Parents of children			
3 years or younger	40	50	10
4-7 years	63	28	9
8-12 years	60	32	8
13-17 years	37	54	9

"Do you happen to put any restrictions on the number of hours your children watch television?"

	Yes	No	Don't Know
Parents (total)	36%	60%	4%
Parents of children:			
3 years or younger	28	65	7
4-7 years	44	50	6
8-12 years	43	51	6
13-17 years	30	64	6

"There has been a good deal of discussion lately about television shows that show violence – that is, gunplay, fistfights and the like. Do you think there is a relationship between violence on TV and the rising rate of crime in the U.S., or not?"

	Yes	No	No Opin.
NATIONWIDE	70%	26%	4%
Parents (total)	67	29	4
Parents of children:			
3 years or younger	66	28	6
4-7 years	62	33	5
8-12 years	65	30	5
13-17 years	67	29	4
Non-parents	72	23	5

"It has been proposed that all television programs which show violence be taken off television entirely. Would you favor or oppose this?"

	Favor	Oppose	No Opin.
NATIONWIDE	35%	58%	7%
Parents (total)	29	63	8
Parents of children:			
3 years or younger	30	61	9
4-7 years	29	64	7
8-12 years	32	60	8
13-17 years	30	59	11
Non-parents	41	52	7

"It has been proposed that all television programs with violence be shown only after 10:00 at night, after the bedtime of most children. Would you favor or oppose this?"

	Favor	Oppose	No Opin.
NATIONWIDE	71%	22%	7%
Parents (total)	70	24	6
Parents of children:			
3 years or younger	68	26	6
4-7 years	66	27	7
8-12 years	70	23	7
13-17 years	69	23	8
Non-parents	71	21	8

The survey results reported today are based on in-person, in-home interviews with 1,513 adults, 18 and over, taken in more than 300 scientifically selected localities across the nation.

Religious Figures Place High On "Most Admired" Lists

Religious figures place high on the 1979 'Most Admired Man' and 'Most Admired Woman' lists.

President Jimmy Carter and Pope John Paul II top the list of men most admired by the American public, while First Lady Rosalynn Carter, former First Lady Betty Ford, and Nobel Peace Prize winner, Mother Teresa of Calcutta, top the list of most admired women.

Survey respondents in these studies, which have been conducted for more than three decades, are asked to give their choices without a list of names.

Here are the questions asked in the survey:

"What man (woman) that you have heard or read about, living today in any part of the world, do you admire the most? Who is your second choice?"

Following are the results, based on first and second choices combined:

Most Admired Man – 1979

1. Jimmy Carter
2. Pope John Paul II
3. Edward Kennedy
4. Anwar Sadat
5. Ronald Reagan
6. Rev. Billy Graham
7. Gerald Ford
8. Henry Kissinger
9. Richard Nixon
10. Menachem Begin

Most Admired Woman – 1979

1. Rosalynn Carter
2. Betty Ford
3. Mother Teresa of Calcutta
4. Margaret Thatcher
5. Barbara Walters
6. Lillian Carter
7. Patricia Nixon
8. Anita Bryant
9. Coretta King
10. Jacqueline Onassis

Most Teens Approve Pre-Marital Sex

"People who are in love don't follow society's standards, only their own. And if they both think it's right for them – beautiful."

The "it" this 16-year-old girl refers to is pre-marital sex – a practice most American teen-agers do not condemn.

By a two-to-one margin, teens in the latest Gallup Youth Survey view pre-marital sex as not wrong. Specifically, 59 percent say sex outside marriage is all right while half as many, 30 percent, take the opposite view. About one-in-nine, 11 percent, are undecided.

Despite this attitude about pre-marital sex, it should not be assumed that virginity has lost its importance among young people.

Although a 41 percent plurality says it is "not very important" to them whether or not the person they marry is a virgin, half of teens say it is either "very" (23 percent) or at least "fairly" important (27 percent).

TEENAGERS DEBATE ISSUE

One 17-year-old girl to whom virginity in her partner is of little concern prefers experience and expects that she, too, will not approach her marriage night as a neophyte.

But another girl, one to whom the virginity of her partner is very important, balks at this reasoning.

"To me it would be an insult to marry someone who is not a virgin," she said. "I just feel I should be the first."

Although a majority of teens in all population groups say pre-marital sex is not wrong, there are some significant differences of opinion. And among the most distinct is the difference between boys and girls.

With boys, the view that pre-marital sex is no vice prevails by a three-to-one margin, 66-22 percent. Girls, however, are much more closely divided – 52-38 percent.

Older teens – 16 to 18 years old – of both sexes also are more willing to say sex before marriage is permissible (64 percent) than their younger – 13 to 15 years old – counterparts (54 percent).

In defending his opinion, one-18-year-old boy questions the importance of ceremony to interpersonal relationships.

"What's the difference between married and unmarried," he asked, "except a ceremony, blood test, and license?"

Not surprisingly, teens living in the traditionally more conservative areas of the nation have views that differ from those of their contemporaries in other regions.

While at least two teens in three living in the East (67 percent) and far West (69 percent) say pre-marital sex is not improper, only half (52 percent) share these views in the Midwest and South.

Interestingly, teens from broken homes have a more liberal outlook on pre-marital sexual relations – 73 percent think it isn't wrong – than do those whose parents are still married (56 percent).

Predictably, attitudes toward pre-marital sex correlate highly with the importance one places on virginity in a marriage partner. That is, those who say it's very important that they marry a virgin are decidedly less likely to endorse pre-marital sex (33 percent) than those who say marrying a virgin is either fairly important (58 percent) or not at all important (81 percent).

Attitudes toward the importance of marrying a virgin is similar to that found concerning pre-marital sex. In all population groups, the plurality view is that this is not a very important criterion. Again differences in outlook exist by region, sex, and marital status of the respondent's parents.

Among teens attaching little importance to marrying a virgin is a 16-year-old boy.

"Being a virgin is of no importance in marriage," he said. "Marriage is a commitment to love and be loved by one other person."

Sharing that viewpoint is an 18-year-old girl who said, "As long as you know that the person you marry loves and respects you, their past history with sex should not be important."

One teen who thinks it's fairly important that her husband be a virgin emphasizes personal qualities, but admits past history would not keep her from marrying the man she loves.

As one might expect, opinions on this question based on attitudes toward pre-marital sex showed the wides differences.

Among people who believe pre-marital sex is wrong, the prevailing view (held by 46 percent) is that marrying a virgin is very important. Conversely, among those who say sex before marriage is all right a 57 percent majority believes it's not very important to marry a virgin.

The results are based on telephone interviews with 1,174 teen-agers across the nation, interviewed during the period February 24-March 6, 1978.

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PRE-MARITAL SEX WRONG OR NOT?

	Yes, wrong	Not wrong	No opinion
NATIONWIDE	30%	59%	11%
All boys	22	66	12
13-15 years	25	59	16
16-18 years	19	73	8
All girls	38	52	10
13-15 years	39	49	12
16-18 years	36	54	10
Both sexes:			
13-15 years old	32	54	14
16-18 years old	28	64	8
Parents married	32	56	12
Parents divorced	16	73	11
East	25	67	8
Midwest	35	52	13
South	36	52	12
West	20	69	11

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